United States Environmental Protection Agency
Criminal Investigation Division
Investigative Activity Report

Case Number
1000-0487

Case Title:
Pacific Steel and Recycling

Reporting Office:
Seattle, WA, Area Office

Subject of Report:
20150821 Interview of (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Clean Harbors

Activity Date:
August 21, 2015

Reporting Official and Date:
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
Special Agent
16-SEP-2015, Signed by: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Approving Official and Date:
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
Assistant Special Agent in Charge
Assistant Special Agent in Charge
17-SEP-2015, Approved by: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

SYNOPSIS

On August 21, 2015, SA (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) interviewed (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Director of Field Services for Clean Harbors an environmental restoration company, regarding Clean Harbors involvement in the chemical release incident of August 12, 2015 at the Pacific Steel and Recyling facility in Spokane, Washington

DETAILS

On August 21, 2015, I interviewed (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Director of Field Services for Clean Harbors an environmental restoration company, regarding Clean Harbors involvement in the chemical release incident of August 12, 2015 at the Pacific Steel and Recyling facility in Spokane, Washington. After being notified of the nature of the interview and the identity of the interviewing agent, Ottmar, in substance, provided the following information:

On August 12, 2015, he received a phone call from (b) (6), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) a Compliance Specialist for Pacific Steel and Recycling (PSR) regarding a chemical release which occurred at the Spokane, Washington facility of PSR. (b) (6), (b) (7) explained that PSR had a chemical release which they believe to be chlorine gas. (b) (6), (b) (7) further explained that the Spokane Fire Department was on scene and there were approximately eight people being medically treated as a result of the chemical release. He agreed to assist PSR, gathered the appropriate gear and left Portland, Oregon for the PSR facility in Spokane.

He contacted his Clean Harbor personnel near Spokane and reached (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) who went to the PSR facility and contacted the on scene fire commander. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) began making an assessment of the chemical release scene and was gathering information from law enforcement and fire services on scene.

At approximately 2200 hours, he arrived on scene and met with the on scene fire Incident Commander. The Incident Commander gave him a form 208 which transferred the scene over to Clean Harbors for testing and cleanup. Clean Harbor did not commence cleanup of the PSR release scene at this time. The Incident Commander explained to him that the fire department believed that this was a chlorine gas release as some of the clothes of the victims were tested with meters which indicated chlorine. He was given a cell phone picture of the gas release for informational purposes. He left one person from Clean Harbors at the scene overnight in order to secure the scene and left the scene.

He remembers speaking with a PSR representative named "(b) (6), (b) (7)" who was questioning him as to

what had occurred. He knows the CEO of PSR arrived on scene from Montana and came to the chemical release scene. The PSR personnel appeared to him to be distraught with the news of what occurred with the chemical release.

PSR company representatives were very forthcoming with access to company records and maps. He felt the representatives just wanted the problem fixed. The company knew right away that the release point was a pressurized cylinder, but did not know the contents of the release. The PSR management personnel seemed shocked that the cylinder was in the "Metso" or sheer recycling machine.

On August 13, 2015, he completed a Health and Safety Procedure (HASP) form and several of the Clean Harbors employees donned Level B Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and entered the scene. Inside of the chemical release scene, the Clean Harbors employees took photos and sampled the material residue on the PSR equipment. The results of the preliminary sampling tests returned a pH level of 3, or corrosive, as the chemical release left an orange residue on the PSR equipment and surrounding area.

The test results cannot definitively show results for chlorine as the testing is only of the residue and not the actual gas which dissipated quickly after the release. Chlorine gas is very volatile and will quickly rise upon release while attempting to connect with oxygen molecules. Then when the chlorine becomes dissipated in the large amount of oxygen it will sink to low area on the ground because it is considered a "heavy" gas. The high temperature of the day and the wind allowed the chlorine gas to dissipate quickly.

According to his information there was only chlorine gas inside of the cylinder and no liquid. As the chlorine gas was exposed to open air, it turns into hydrochloric acid. When the Clean Harbor personnel completed the evaluation of the scene, they returned to the command center. No other cleanup type of activities occurred that day.

On August 14, 2015, Clean Harbor personnel donned proper PPE and began the cleanup of the chemical release on the PSR property. The employees pulled the air filters and air conditioning filters from the PSR equipment located near the chemical release. It is believed at the time that the chlorine gas particles would have trapped in the filters. The Clean Harbor employees also determined a rough area in which the chemical release plume would have contaminated in order to determine the total cleanup area.

Clean Harbor employees scrubbed all of the equipment in and around the Metso machine and used a lift to obtain the height needed for the cleanup. The Clean Harbor employees operated the PSR excavator to remove the cylinder inside of the Metso in order to clean both the Metso and the partially crushed cylinder. They did not operate the Metso and left an I-beam and some other plate metal inside of the Metso.

They placed the 1-ton cylinder on a tarp on the ground and began the decontamination process. They decided that the best way to decontaminate the cylinder was to submerge it in a water container. They submerged the cylinder and rolled it in the water while testing the water coming out of the cylinder for pH levels. Once the test strips used on the cylinder water read a pH of approximately 7, the cylinder was removed from the water container and set to dry. Once the tank

was dry it was moved to a close PSR building for examination. He believes the tank has a lot of "miles" on it, meaning it is quite old.

At the request of the Washington Department of Ecology, the Clean Harbor employees checked the storm drains in the PSR facility and surrounding area for pH levels. All were found to be neutral in their pH levels. Because there was a large amount of oil and grease on the Metso machine, the Clean Harbor personnel used a "Chlor D" test in order to determine if there was chlorine present. They decided to clean up this oil as it may contain chlorine. The Clean Harbor personnel tested the oil inside of the excavator for chlorine, but did not find any present.

He believes the powder substance which is visible on the cylinder is sodium bicarbonate, which is the result of mixing the chlorine residue with water.

At the completion of the cleanup, Clean Harbor employees gave PSR personnel a walk through over the decontaminated area. Clean Harbor turned over the cleanup site at PSR to PSR employees at approximately 1630 hours.

*Also present during this interview was (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) of the Washington Department of Labor and Industries.

** At the end of the interview, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) gave me a thumb drive which contained photos of the chemical release area in PSR facility. This thumb drive was placed in the EPA CID Seattle Area Office evidence room for safekeeping.

ATTACHMENT

20150831 Photos COC.pdf